

Shade/ Shelter/Covers

Horses need both.

If your paddock doesn't contain natural shade and shelter, then you need to provide some artificially.

A lovely big tree is the best shade, as the movement of the leaves and branches will create a breeze. Horses love to hang out under trees in the heat of the day.

I have recently seen advertised a shade structure that can be attached to a fence, (not a wire one for heavens sake, if there could be horses on the other side).

A tree often doesn't cut it for shelter in severe weather. You will need something more effective. The ideal is a large free access shed. A row of trees can be good, a hedge, a building they can get behind when it turns nasty.

To Cover or Not to Cover!!

The answer to this very much depends upon your particular situation. If you have the ideal setup, where your horse has free access to really good shelter, then you do not need to cover your horse.

Otherwise cover him!

The argument that horses are OK when they are shivering because it is a natural response to help keep warm doesn't cut it with me. **It means they are cold!!!** Why let them be cold when you don't need to? It is also natural for horses in the wild to go a bit hungry and lose weight in the winter but we don't let that happen these days either!

I've also observed many times the coats of horses which have been flattened by the wearing of covers all winter, stand up again real quick when the covers are removed.

The fact is that horses don't live in anything like their natural environment, they don't move 30k's a day foraging, seeking suitable shelter and keeping themselves active and warm.

Instead they hang around waiting for you to come along with their hay!

I've seen our horses when they were uncovered, obviously cold and miserable, become instantly more comfortable and happy when their covers were put on.

Horses can cope with some cold, but not incessant rain and wind for days on end as regularly occurs in some areas of New Zealand. Sure they will all survive but once again there is no need for any unnecessary suffering.

A greater sin is to leave covers on horses when it is warm! This is really mean. You know what it's like yourself when you get too hot, especially to the point where you start sweating.

It is also very harmful. Vital enzymatic reactions take place within a very narrow temperature range of about 1 degree. Don't let your horse get too hot! Or too cold!!